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N I E L S E N , S H A K E S P E A R E A N D T H E F L U T E C O N C E R T O

From Character To Archetype¹

By David Fanning and Michelle Assay

From Berlioz to the present day, Shakespeare has held a privileged position among authors favoured by composers for setting to music. In quantitative terms, a measure of his international importance in this regard may be taken from the list of some 380 theatrical works composed to his plays up to 30 years ago,² and from the many thousands of entries – covering concert as well as stage music – in the five-volume catalogue published around the same time.³ For Berlioz, perhaps the most obsessive of all Shakespeare-composers, it was a matter of music freely composed to his own adaptations of Shakespeare's scenarios. For Verdi and Britten, librettists smoothed the way. Others, such as Nielsen in the case to be examined below, worked to commission for a specific event or theatrical run, to scenarios controlled by others and with a presumed degree of ephemerality in mind.

These categories are by no means fixed, however. 'Applied music' (from the German *angewandte Musik*) to Shakespearean themes, whether for stage or screen, has not infrequently involved front-rank composers, and occasionally it has made the leap to the concert repertoire (Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Walton), generally leaving the original production unlikely ever to be seen again (Sibelius for *The Tempest*). Sometimes, too, the process of transfer from ephemerality to permanence seems to have been a case of musical imagery conceived in 'applied' contexts but subsequently reconfigured – superficially or radically, consciously or otherwise – for concert use in works unrelated to the original Shakespeare context. Sometimes the extent of such reconfiguration may even make it impossible to agree on the nature of the relationship between source and destination. Our article deals with an instance of this last

1 This article originated as a conference paper for the conference 'Music and the Nordic Breakthrough', University of Oxford, July-August 2015.

2 See Christopher R. Wilson, 'Shakespeare, William', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, London 1992, vol. 4, 338-47.

3 Bryan N.S. Gooch and David Thatcher, *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue*, Oxford 1991.

category, examining how a single idea from a one-off stage event became productive in a concert work composed ten years later that has since gone on to become one of the most often performed of 20th-century concertos: namely Nielsen's Flute Concerto.

Among musical engagements with Shakespeare in the Nordic region, the one that stands out is Sibelius's 34-movement, hour-long score for a production of *The Tempest*. The music was composed in 1925, premiered in Copenhagen in March 1926, and recast into two concert suites that have been widely acknowledged as among the most important of his late-period works.⁴ Less well-known, but certainly worth more than the negligible attention it has received, is Nielsen's music for the tercentenary Shakespeare celebrations at the Kronborg castle in Helsingør (Elsinore), performed there in June 1916. Given the venue, this event was naturally enough built around the story of *Hamlet*. However, it also included two song-settings for the characters of Ariel and Caliban from *The Tempest*, which will provide the focus for the second half of our article as we work towards a proposed new understanding of one of Nielsen's most important works.

Nielsen is rarely if ever discussed in relation to Shakespeare. A Google search for 'Nielsen and Shakespeare' brings up, after the Complete Edition score of the Shakespeare celebration, the 1921 silent film of *Hamlet* with Danish actress Asta Nielsen in the title role, followed by comedienne Kristine Nielsen's acting of Puck, and obituaries for Leslie Nielsen mentioning his role as Commander John J. Adams in the much-derided *Tempest*-related science-fiction film of 1956, *Forbidden Planet*. Apart from the incidental music we are about to describe, it is true that Carl Nielsen had no direct creative engagement with Shakespeare, and we are certainly not proposing some kind of deep-rooted affinity that has gone unnoticed and of which we should all suddenly sit up and take notice. However, a round-up of the various snippets of documented indirect contact at least opens up the possibility that Shakespeare may have permeated the composer's consciousness rather more than has been acknowledged.

Our argument is the product of three converging lines: David Fanning's long-standing engagement with diverse aspects of Nielsen's life and work; Michelle Assay's fostering of a new research community for 'Shakespeare and Music'; and our joint selection, translation and commentary of Nielsen's letters and diaries.⁵ Our article on Nielsen and dualities⁶ provides an additional intellectual framework for the present

4 Described and analysed in Daniel Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence: Sibelius's *Tempest* Music and the Invention of Late Style', in Grimley (ed.), *Sibelius and his World*, Princeton 2011, 186-226. For Sibelius's own dissatisfaction with the Copenhagen production and further description of its style, see *ibid.*, 193-95.

5 David Fanning and Michelle Assay, *Carl Nielsen: Selected Letters and Diaries*, Copenhagen 2017 (CNL).

discussion, since we shall be steering towards another instance of the composer's predilection for musically productive oppositions, once again as embodied in a two-movement work. Operating with drastically polarised dualities is one of Nielsen's most distinctive contributions to the renewal of large-scale instrumental forms, and it supplies a crucial ingredient in the process of transfer from the ephemeral to the permanent, as we understand it.

The 1916 Shakespeare Celebration

The now annual Shakespeare festivals at Hamlet's castle of Kronborg in the city of Helsingør (Shakespeare's Elsinore) 45 kilometres north of Copenhagen, are claimed to constitute 'the longest-standing continuous Shakespeare performance tradition in the world'. They date back to 1816, the Shakespeare bicentenary year, when *Hamlet* was performed at the castle for the first time.⁷ The other centenaries have naturally been accompanied by special events. Most recently, in 2016 the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's death, coinciding with the Festival's 200th anniversary, was marked by what was billed as the first Nordic opera on *Hamlet*, with music by Hugi Guðmundsson entitled *Hamlet in absentia*, which won the Icelandic Music Prize the following year.⁸

On 24 June 1916 the Shakespeare tercentenary and 100th anniversary of the Festival were celebrated in no less style, with leading figures in the country's intellectual and artistic life being approached for their input. Predictably enough, part of the event was given over to extracts from *Hamlet*, though without any specially composed music, so far as the records tell. These extracts were preceded by a newly commissioned Prologue, with words by Helge Rode and music by Carl Nielsen (CNW 15).

Rode (1870-1937) was a well-known writer, critic and journalist, of the same generation as Nielsen. The two men would enjoy a second, rather more famous collaboration four years later with another gala play, entitled *Moderen* (The Mother, here in the sense of Motherland) to celebrate the return of Southern Jutland to Danish rule following the post-War plebiscite (the area had been annexed to Prussia since 1864 and to Germany since 1871) (CNW 18). This latter score was the occasion for what would become two of Nielsen's most beloved songs in *folkelig* (folk-like or folk-popular, in the sense of being easily memorable and appropriate for amateur or community singing) style: 'My girl is as bright as amber' (*Min Pige er saa lys som Rav*) and

6 Fanning and Assay, "Dreams and Deeds" and other Dualities: Nielsen and the Two-movement Symphony', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 26-48.

7 <http://esfn.eu/festivals/shakespeare-festival-at-hamlets-castle>, accessed 16 April 2020.

8 Description and video excerpt at <http://nordicopera.dk/en/hamlet-in-absentia/>, accessed 16 April 2020.

'As a fleet ready to set sail' (*Som en rejselysten Flaade*).⁹ Nielsen and Rode corresponded on and off for many years, and Rode was among the many who sent congratulations on the composer's 60th birthday in June 1925, doing so in a specially written poem of 19 stanzas.¹⁰

Rode's poetry has been ranged under the heading of a Danish 'neo-Romantic revival' in the 1890s. One of his main claims to fame was as a critic of Georg Brandes (1842-1927) and in particular the latter's concept of the Modern Breakthrough, which had been mooted in 1871 and elaborated over the coming years as an influential label for contemporary trends in Nordic literature. Rode's critique was most powerfully formulated in his 1913 essay entitled 'Det sjælelige Gennembrud' [The Breakthrough of the Soul]. Where Brandes had stressed the virtues of Darwinist realism, common sense and rational scientific explanation, Rode's priorities were Christian idealism and mysticism. He regarded the individualist-atheist Brandes as a false prophet. Rode's concept of the Breakthrough of the Soul was first announced in a lecture by him in 1911, then written up as an essay in 1913 but only published, with some adjustments, in 1928, in a collection of writings under the common title *Det sjælelige Gennembrud*. The idea seems to have originated in a mystical, transformative experience of oneness with Nature which he experienced during a stay in the Norwegian mountains in 1891. Rode came to apply the term to general cultural trends in the 1890s, in conscious opposition to Brandes.¹¹

Brandes himself gave a speech at the 1916 Shakespeare celebrations.¹² Apart from being the being the theorist of the Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavian literature, he was spiritual father of the movement that became known as 'cultural radicalism', which played an important role in the arts in Denmark from about 1930, i.e. from shortly after Brandes's death in 1927 and around the time of Nielsen's own in 1931.¹³ He was also an international authority on Shakespeare. His three-volume study was published in 1895 and 1896,¹⁴ and soon translated into French and English.¹⁵ Hugely influential, not least on the likes of Sigmund Freud and James Joyce, it was reprinted in 1913. Not long after that, on 23 July 1916, Nielsen wrote to his friend, the philologist Ove Jørgensen:

9 For more on the symbolic-nationalist tone of *Moderen* and on its Danish reception, see Hanne Engberg, *En digters historie: Helge Rode 1870-1937* [A poet's story: Helge Rode 1879-1937], Copenhagen 1996, 289-96.

10 See CNB VIII, 372-75.

11 See Engberg, *En digters historie*, 54, 206-17.

12 Published in *Politiken*, 25 June 1916.

13 See Marie-Louise Zervides's article in the present volume.

14 Georg Brandes, *William Shakespeare*, three vols., Copenhagen 1895-1896.

15 Brandes, *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, London 1905, rev. with two additional appendices, 1920.

Recently I've read nearly two volumes of Brandes's *Shakespeare*. You probably remember that we talked about both of them when we were last together. I've also read *Timon of Athens*, which I didn't know at all, and *Romeo and Juliet* again. But actually I'm a poor reader, because I let myself get carried away and therefore have to wait to gain a general impression until I've let it settle peacefully and looked it up again. Anyway, there are many fine things in Brandes's work, and I feel constantly inclined to get hold of other works about Shakespeare.¹⁶

If by 'general impression' Nielsen meant something that his musical personality could relate to and potentially turn to productive creative use, then that would accord strongly with the argument we are preparing to make.

Nielsen had personal contacts with Brandes dating back to the 1890s, though it is not known how their connection was first formed. Brandes was a generation older, and the young composer addressed him initially as Doctor, later Professor. In a diary entry of 28 May 1893, not long after completing his First Symphony, Nielsen mentioned going to Brandes's house, where he borrowed the latter's manuscript of the translation of the 'Song of Songs', and the two 'talked for a long time about Napoleon, Voltaire, Christ and the Inner Mission', the last of these being a movement to strengthen pious Christian principles within Danish society. Their conversations were evidently sparky, because Nielsen compared them to the fencing lessons he was taking at the time.¹⁷ He evidently continued to consider Brandes a major intellectual figure. On 19 March 1915 he wrote him a supportive letter in connection with his polemic against French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, in which Brandes had defended Denmark's position of neutrality during the First World War.¹⁸

There is more that could be said about Nielsen and Brandes, but it would be unwise to try to force the point about Nielsen's connection with the 'Modern Breakthrough', or indeed with Rode's reconfiguration of the concept. The topic is not one that appears as such in any of Nielsen's writings, and whatever he may or may not have thought about it can only be inferred. He was certainly prepared to comment, albeit laconically, on other movements of his day – such as socialism and nationalism. But in general he seems to have been far more interested in being an active part of the 'Breakthrough', however designated, than in taking any particular attitude towards it.

16 CNL, 403; CNB VI, 421. Four days later, Nielsen reported that further reading of Brandes's *Shakespeare* had left him less convinced, in particular over the connections Brandes had drawn regarding 'Shakespeare's personal relationship to the dramas' (ibid., 390). For more on Brandes's *Shakespeare*, and *The Tempest* in particular, see Grimley, 'Storm, Symphonies, Silence', 195-97.

17 CNL, 102; CNB I, 297.

18 CNL, 369-70; CNB V, 214-15.

If anything, his professed stance towards ‘modernism’, even when responding to a complimentary application of the term to him, was sceptical,¹⁹ though this is not to deny that from the present-day historical perspective the apparent oxymoron ‘popular modernism’ captures his own somewhat paradoxical musical-political outlook rather well.²⁰

The 1916 Shakespeare celebration was not an occasion for scholarly reflection, either during or after the event. Rather it gave three of Denmark’s cultural icons an occasion to explore philosophical and character affinities between the playwright and their country. Rode had all the more reason to rise to the occasion, since February of that year had marked his 25th anniversary as a writer, and the perfunctory celebration of that occasion had caused him sore disappointment.²¹ Part of Rode’s text for the Prologue consisted of five songs – two for solo voices, two for solo with chorus, and one for chorus alone – and these were set to music by Nielsen in what it is safe to say is one of his least known works. The complete text of the Prologue was published later in the year,²² and it is helpfully summarized by Kirsten Flensborg Petersen in the Foreword to Volume 6 of Series 1 in the Nielsen Complete Edition. This is also the only place where all five songs and their texts are published.²³

Apart from the two solo songs, delivered in Nielsen’s settings by a tenor in the guise of Ariel and a bass as Caliban, respectively, the non-musical sections contained parts for a Prologue in person, for a fictional citizen of Elsinore named Jeppe Jeppesen, and for a stranger from England who engages the Prologue in conversation about Danish and English Kings and about the plots of various Shakespeare plays. There is no drama as such. Rather, the songs for Ariel and Caliban stand as auditory incarnations of a whole web of thoughts about the light and dark sides of the human mind. The Prologue frames the presentation with a homage to summer at the beginning, and a call for freedom of the imagination at the end. In June 1916 the homage to summer turned out to be somewhat ironic, since the premiere of the Prologue had to be postponed a few days because of rain, and even then strong winds played havoc with the outdoor acoustics, as reviews attest.²⁴

The first song in Rode/Nielsen’s Prologue, for solo and chorus, is an apostrophe to Shakespeare’s all-encompassing humanity. It is couched in the striding triple time that Nielsen occasionally used for his *folkelige* songs. At this time, he had recently

19 See Hans Tørsleff, ‘Carl Nielsen og “Modernismen”’, interview in *Dagbladet* (Oslo), 6 October 1931, repr. in *Samtid*, 616-19.

20 See Mikkel Bruun Zangenberg, ‘Breaking Down the Breakthrough’, in Daniel Grimley and Phillip Ross Bullock (eds.), *The Nordic Breakthrough, Musical Modernity and Cultural Exchange, 1890-1930*, Woodbridge forthcoming.

21 Engberg, *En digters historie*, 247-49.

22 Helge Rode, *Shakespeare: Et lille Festsplil*, Copenhagen 1916.

23 CNU I/6, Copenhagen 2007, 271-85.

24 *Ibid.*, lviii.

finished his Fourth Symphony (*The Inextinguishable*), which itself features a redemptive triple-time theme in symphonized quasi-folklke style, and his main ongoing project was the folk-popular songs that would appear in various collections over the coming years. The fifth and final verse concludes: ‘You were judge, sword and flag,/ Hail to you, proud swan of Avon!/ The sons of the North give you praise!’ (Example 1). Picking up from this image, and addressing the apparent gender imbalance (not to say stereotypes), the second song concludes: ‘In your deep heart we find our mirror-image./ O great suitor, the daughters of the North give you their consent’ (in the sense of: ‘plight you their troth’) (Example 2).

[Tempo giusto]

Du var Dom - mer, Sværd og Fa - ne. Hil dig A - vors

stol - te Sva - nel! Nor - dens Søn - ner hyl - der dig!

Ex. 1: Prologue to Shakespeare, Song 1, conclusion

[Andantino quasi allegretto ♩ = 56]

I dit dy - be Hjer - te spej - ler vi os end, O hø - je Bej - ler

Nor - dens Dø - tre gir Dig: Ja.

Ex. 2: Prologue to Shakespeare, Song 2, conclusion

Then we come to the songs for Caliban and Ariel. Rode's texts broadly follow Shakespeare's characterisation in *The Tempest*, in that Caliban is consumed by self-loathing and misanthropy, while Ariel has the gift of music and magic, and carries the promise of freedom, even though, like Caliban, he is for the time being Prospero's slave. They are spirits of the Earth and the Air, respectively: a common enough interpretation, to be found in, amongst other places, Henry Norman Hudson's 1909 commented edition of the play,²⁵ though their duality may of course be interpreted in other ways.

Nielsen's setting for Caliban's song is in a plodding E flat minor, a key he reserved for some of the darker moments in some of his otherwise brightest works, for instance the Melancholic Temperament of the Second Symphony, the appearance of Corporal Mors to announce the de-masking near the end of *Maskarade*, and the first movement of the Flute Concerto. In the last of these, to quote Michael Steinberg, building on Nielsen's own commentary: 'The first music that sounds like a theme rather than an introductory flourish is in fact in E flat minor' (Examples 3 and 4).²⁶

The text of the first verse of Caliban's Song, addressed to the sun, runs: 'Let me snore here in the shadows; / when you shine on my back, / it hurts me like the crack of a whip. / Let me lie. / No longer would I be a jester and a slave.' Nielsen lets the harmony drift flatwards from E flat minor into double-flattedness: in the last bar of this drift (b. 11 in Example 3, above) the non-functional French-sixth harmony is notated as D flat, G double flat, A double flat, C flat, though the ear probably registers nothing more bizarre than the extreme darkness that goes with the initial tonality and the flatwards drift. Just before this point the voice-part gives up on pitch altogether and the singer is directed to snore – probably not too gently, given the accompanying *fortissimo* in the orchestra. Nielsen wrote Caliban's song with Emil Holm in mind.²⁷ This prominent Danish bass was also something of an activist on Nielsen's behalf; when working in Stuttgart he agitated for many months for a performance of Nielsen's Third Symphony. In later life he was founder-director of the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Sadly, no recording was made of Caliban's Song at the time – indeed none exists to the present day – which makes it hard to gauge the effectiveness of the

²⁵ Boston, Ginn, 1879.

²⁶ Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*, New York 1998, 335. In a programme note for a performance on 12 February 1930, Nielsen himself referred to this passage as a 'little, more definite' motif, compared to the 'free, fantasizing tone' of the opening of the Concerto – see CNU, II/9, Copenhagen 2002, xxxiii. The preceding instrumental flourish resembles the opening of Smetana's *Bartered Bride*, albeit in a more tonally and emotionally chaotic presentation. Nielsen had previously echoed Smetana's opening gambit in the 'Humoresque' from his 1889 Fantasy Pieces for Oboe and Piano, CNW 65.

²⁷ See CNB V, 391.

Andante

Andante

Lad mig snor-ke her i Skyg-gen, naar du skin-ner mig paa Ryg-gen

ff *dim.* *mp*

(snoring)

ram-mer det som Pi-ske-smæld. Lad mig lig-ge.

fp *ff* *p* *ff* *dim.* *p*

Jeg vil ik-ke læn-ger væ-re Nar og Træl.

p *p* *ff* *dim.* *p* *dim.*

Ex. 3: Caliban's song, with text to verse 1

[Allegro moderato ♩ = 100-112]

p *molto stacc.*

p

mfz

Ex. 4: Flute concerto, first movement, bb. 12-14

'snoring' direction. Whether it was interpreted literally only for the first verse, with its initial reference to that condition, is not recorded. Be that as it may, the characterisation of Caliban as an uncivilised, darkly comic figure, with words and music in close agreement, is unmistakable.

In complete contrast is Ariel's Song. This is assigned to tenor, which is interesting in itself, because although the play assigns male gender to Ariel, it has been traditional from the mid-17th century on for it to be taken by a female, as it often is today, not least in Thomas Adès's 2004 opera, where Ariel's strato-coloratura timbre is perhaps the work's most instantly striking feature. Nielsen's setting itself is no less effective when performed by a soprano.²⁸ But in its original version for tenor and orchestra, it is the only movement from the Prologue that has been recorded to date.²⁹

Rode's words for Ariel seek to assuage the darkness and cynicism of Caliban's Song. The first verse goes, again in literal translation: 'Even when the thunder rolls, the ether is light and clear. / Hear me! Ariel sings, and music is the Gods' answer. / I can whisper through the noise, / through cold bring warm light. / Keep me in your bosom. / If you feel your happiness has gone, / Don't believe that, but remember that I, / Ariel, am your music' (Example 5, where the accompaniment is a reduction of the orchestral version rather than a reproduction of the more florid piano re-write). That Rode tailored the words closely to the demands of the occasion is clear from a comparison with the poem likewise entitled 'Ariel's Song' that appeared in the 1924 collection of 38 poems under the title *Ariel*; there both the song and the volume as a whole reference the many-faceted but mainly wind-associated spirit, as found not only in Shakespeare but also in Homer, Goethe and Shelley.³⁰

The equation of Ariel with music comes straight from the play, where song is the medium to which he/she tends. The words 'Full fathom five' are the most famous part of Ariel's Song – certainly for musicians, given their settings by Purcell (accredited, in the semi-opera to *The Tempest*), Stravinsky (*Three Songs from Shakespeare*), Tippett (*Songs for Ariel*), Sibelius (as a separate number in his *Tempest* music, and indeed a version possibly used in early productions by Shakespeare's contemporary Robert Johnson. In fact this part of the text is the beginning of the second stanza in Shakespeare's original.

Nielsen devises a very simple harmonic analogy for the imagery of the opening verse, moving from E minor ('Though the thunder roar') via E major ('The ether

28 As it is, in the composer's later voice-and-piano version, by Merete Hjortsø, EMI 754317-1 [1990, LP].

29 By Jan Lund, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Douglas Bostock, on Classico CLASCD268 [2000].

30 See Engberg, *En digters historie*, 218-19.

Andantino quasi allegretto

Selv naar Tor-de-nen tyn-ger er Æ-te-ren lys og klar. Hør mig! A-ri-el syn-ger, Mu-
Andantino quasi allegretto
 sik er Gu-der-nes Svar. Jeg kan hvis-ke gen-nem Larm gen-nem Kul-de
 ly-se varm. Gem mig i din Barm. Sy-nes du din Lyk-ke
 gik. Tro det ej, husk at jeg A-ri-el er din Mu-
 sik!

Ex. 5: Ariel's Song (verse 1)

is light and clear') finally to G major for 'Ariel is your music'. G major is generally a euphoric/pastoral key for Nielsen: witness all six symphonies apart from No. 3, the *Espansiva*. As for E major, it features most prominently in the respectively clamorous and reconciliatory affirmations at the end of *The Inextinguishable* and the Flute Concerto. By this we do not mean to assert a meaningful inter-textual cross-referencing, only that Nielsen was highly sensitive to connections between tonality and affect: connections that he inherited yet also contributed to and personalised.

'Ariel's Song' caught on rather well after its debut in the Shakespeare Celebration. At his publishers' encouragement, Nielsen put out a solo version in the same year, and it was widely sung in concert.³¹ Even more successful was the final song of the Rode/Nielsen Prologue. This was originally to have been sung to the tune of 'God save the King', but for political reasons connected with Denmark's neutrality in the Great War, the composer was asked to supply a new melody.³² Even though the metre in Nielsen's setting is quadruple rather than triple, the words themselves fit easily with the familiar tune of 'God save the King' (Example 6). The stern two-part writing, whose effectiveness was not lost on reviewers of the 1916 event, clearly contributes to the song's statuesque quality.

Moderato ♩ = 96

Hæ - der til Dig - tets Drot i Fan - ta - si - ens Slot af Guld og Blaat.

Giv af din O - ver - flod, Kær - lig - hed, Vil - je, Mod,

Vis - dom - mes Hel - se - bod! o, hø - je Drot.

Ex. 6: Final song, verse 1. Text: *Geetings to the King of poetry in the gold and blue castle of fantasy. / From your abundance give love, will and courage – health-giving wisdom! / O mighty King!*

31 CNU I/6, lx. The voice-and-piano version, with rippling piano figuration in place of the more chordal orchestral writing, is reprinted in CNU III/5, 367-69; for more details see CNU III/7, 88.

32 CNU I/6, lvii.

The new melody proved so catchy that it in turn gained new words in the following year, penned by Valdemar Rørdam (1872-1946). He, like Rode, was a national-conservative by inclination; his reputation was blighted near the end of his life, when he penned a poem in support of Hitler's attempt to annihilate Bolshevism. His re-write of Rode's words under the title: 'Danmark i tusend Aar' (Denmark for a thousand years) (CNW 226), combined with Nielsen's music, became the most famous of the composer's patriotic songs, and even a contender for the status of national anthem.

From ephemeral to eternal

We shall now argue that Nielsen's inadvertent anthem was not the only enduring legacy of the 1916 Shakespeare celebrations. Already on 11 August, two months after the performance of the Prologue, the composer wrote to Ove Jørgensen:

I'm thinking that these two characters [Caliban and Ariel] are elemental and in reality very musical, by which I mean suited for musical treatment, also in absolute musical forms. They encompass all the feelings I've long been dealing with (also in my last symphony [*The Inextinguishable*]), and are in reality inexhaustible [*uutømmelige*, literally un-emptiable] like eternally gushing springs, also in terms of artistic contrast effect. What do you think?³³

He added a clarification on 26 August, seemingly in response to a communication from Jørgensen that has not survived, but which seems to have got the wrong end of the stick:

When I wrote to you the other day I mentioned Ariel and Caliban. My intention wasn't to make these two into principal characters in an opera, but to use them as stimuli to absolute music. I was thinking of a string quartet (chamber music) in one continuous movement, where there should take place, so to speak, a kind of conversation or exchange of feelings between these two elemental beings. In my inner ear I heard the two men's [*Herrers*] voices for some days. But now they've disappeared again, and I'm good for nothing, so it won't come to anything for the time being. And perhaps it's best to wait until I get back to something like normal, if that happens.³⁴

Nielsen's depressed tone came not least from the fact that his marital crisis had flared up earlier in the year, following the full revelation of his infidelities. It had

33 CNL, 403; CNB V, 438.

34 CNL, 404; CNB V, 451.

now finally hit home that he might not ever be able to repair things, and his exchanges with Jørgensen in 1916 contain some especially frank disclosures. Nevertheless, we will argue that the engagement with Ariel and Caliban did eventually bear creative fruit some ten years later, in the Flute Concerto. If we are correct, this would be the most significant creative result of an engagement with Shakespeare that can be traced back at least as far as the composer's early professional years.

It has been said that as one of twelve children growing up in rural Funen, and the product of a 'thatched village school',³⁵ Nielsen was self-conscious about the patchiness of his education. How he repaired his deficiencies is itself a patchy story. Best documented is his ravenous devouring of visual art during his first state-subsidised European trip, especially in Dresden, from September 1890, a year after his first professional appointment, as second violinist in the Royal Theatre Orchestra.³⁶ Precisely which Shakespeare plays or poems he encountered in his youth is not known. But that he knew his Shakespeare from an early age we can gather from a fragmentary letter of 23 October 1889 to his sweetheart Emilie Demant – he was 24 at the time, she barely 16. To Emilie he made some fascinating confessions about his own weaknesses: weaknesses of a moral nature, which in another confession he said had driven him to the point of buying a pistol and walking up and down the streets of Copenhagen wondering how to do away with himself:

I'm sitting here with thoughts of death, my darling, and I can't get rid of them. Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and Ophelia! The churchyard with white bones in the black night. No salvation! None at all! In 50 years' time we may already be lying there, the gravedigger kicking our skull around while singing or piping a jolly tune.³⁷

On 1 December the following year, three months after beginning his first European tour, he made a diary entry, subsequently much quoted, where the context is his surprise that the Germans ranked Carl Maria von Weber so highly:

I'm coming to the conclusion that Weber will be forgotten in a hundred years. There's something jelly-like about much of his music, which won't stand the test of time. After all it's a fact that he who brandishes the hardest fist will

35 Finn Mathiassen, 'Music and Philosophy', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 3 (2008), 67.

36 CNL, 57-60. See also Colin Roth, 'Carl Nielsen's Cultural Self-Education: His Early Engagement with Fine Art and Ideas and the Path towards *Hymnus Amoris*', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 302-27.

37 CNL, 49; CNB I, 91.

be remembered the longest. Beethoven, Michelangelo, Bach, Berlioz, Rembrandt, Shakespeare, Goethe, Henrik Ibsen and the like have all given their times a black eye.³⁸

One interesting thing here is that while Nielsen clearly revered everyone on his list, there were others he would go on to write about with less qualified enthusiasm. Beethoven he would come to find too subjective beside his beloved Mozart; Michelangelo he admired but came to rate below Albrecht Dürer; Berlioz, who surely had a huge influence on his early style,³⁹ and whose works he conducted on occasion, receives little mention in his correspondence and essays, certainly compared to Wagner, who curiously does not feature on Nielsen's 'hardest fist' roster at all; and while Nielsen clearly knew his Ibsen, he was by no means uncritical in his appreciation.

So too, in a way, it was with Shakespeare. In Nielsen's extensive output of songs there are none to Shakespeare's words. Nor are there any operas, though in fact there nearly was one. In a diary entry for 5 January 1891, a month after the 'hardest fist' entry, Nielsen noted that he had been to see *The Merchant of Venice*: 'Previously I didn't like Shakespeare, but now it's different. Maybe you have to be completely mature before you approach him. Am I that? I hope not.' That experience seems to have planted a seed. In September 1897, his wife wrote to him about Brandes's newly published *Shakespeare* book, singling out *The Merchant of Venice* and remarking that Brandes's comments on its 'well-defined characters' (*udprægede Typer*) had made her think how good it might be as an opera. Nielsen seems to have acted on this idea almost straight away, because in the following year a letter from Sophus Michaëlis – well-known poet, novelist and playwright, and an almost exact contemporary of Nielsen's – indicates that he and the composer had been discussing the possibility of an opera based on that very play, to be titled *Portia*. A draft scenario in Nielsen's hand is preserved in the Torben Schousboe collection of the Royal Library, Copenhagen, together with Schousboe's marginal annotations.⁴⁰ On 13 December 1898 Michaëlis promised a fair copy of the first act in a few days, and the rest shortly afterwards. However, nearly a year went by and Michaëlis wrote again to express his disappointment that Nielsen had not replied and had moreover now begun work on a quite

38 CNL, 68; CNB I, 160.

39 See David Fanning, 'Carl Nielsen under the Influence: Some New Sources for the First Symphony', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 3 (2008), 9-27, here esp. 13-14.

40 Torben Schousboes Samling, XIV/2, transcribed in Niels Krabbe, 'Carl Niensens ikke-realiserede operaplaner', *Fund og Forskning* 56 (2017), 297-334, translated and elaborated in the present volume.

different opera.⁴¹ So we never got *Portia*, or *Portia and Shylock*. Instead Nielsen had become obsessed by another drama of extremely ‘well-defined characters’, namely *Saul and David*. He recalled that chain of events in an interview of 1928 in connection with a revival of his Biblical opera in Gothenburg,⁴² confirming that on the earlier occasion his librettist had prepared the first act.

Otherwise documentary sources for Nielsen’s thoughts about Shakespeare are at best tantalising. Among the snippets we have are a couple of references to the famous line: ‘Macbeth hath murdered sleep’, from the time when Nielsen was casting round for a text for his Cantata, *Sleep*, in 1903. But as for mature reflections, we are starved of information. The Brandes volumes, which we know Nielsen read, at least in part, do not survive in the collection of his books housed at the Carl Nielsen Museum in Odense; so we cannot even go hunting for marginalia or highlighted passages. On his tours he recorded going to see various other plays – including *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* – but beyond a few generally positive remarks, he recorded no detailed impressions.

The Flute Concerto and *The Tempest*

What we do have is his music. And here we are about to propose at least one example of a deep-seated affinity that has previously gone unremarked. We recognise that without corroborating evidence of Nielsen’s intended reference to Shakespeare, such affinities might be found in virtually any composer of serious, large-scale works, such is Shakespeare’s range and depth of human commentary. So each case needs careful consideration. Shostakovich, for instance, did engage directly, and very interestingly at various points in his life – from the *Hamlet* incidental music of 1932 up to the late songs, via two more scores for *Hamlet* and two for *King Lear*⁴³ – but is his Fifth Symphony truly ‘Hamletian’, as has been suggested? If so, in what ways and with what relation to his documented intentions for the work? The dangers of wish-fulfilment – of seeking to add value by association with the Shakespeare brand – are all too obvious. Not that absence of evidence of direct engagement has stopped scholars from producing studies such as ‘Pushkin and Shakespeare’, ‘Musorgsky and Shakespeare’, or ‘Wagner and Shakespeare’, and having worthwhile things to say in

41 For a fuller commentary on *Portia* and Nielsen’s other unfinished opera projects, see *ibid.*

42 In *Göteborg-Tidningen*, 27 November 1928, repr. in *Samtid*, 505-07; see also *ibid.*, 853, n.3.

43 For more on Shostakovich’s Shakespeare-themed works, see Michelle Assay, ‘“Hamlet” in the Stalin Era and Beyond: Stage and Score/ Les mises en scène et mises en musique d’Hamlet à l’ère stalinienne et après’, PhD thesis, Universities of Sheffield and Paris Sorbonne, 2017.

the process.⁴⁴ But in general the topic is fraught with pitfalls, because the analogies are too easy to make.⁴⁵

What we are looking for, then, are cases in which circumstantial evidence is strong, and in which the outcome of investigation enhances understanding in a way not afforded by approaches from any other angle. We consider the Flute Concerto to offer just such an example.

To recapitulate briefly: in 1916 Nielsen set words assigned to the characters of Caliban and Ariel, and not long afterwards he was considering the possibility of composing an instrumental work somehow based on those characters or the archetypes they represented. These archetypes he considered to be related to the driving forces of his Fourth Symphony: by which he can only have meant the antagonism between life-affirming and life-threatening forces, resulting in an affirmation of the latter.

The next chapter in the story is that Nielsen's wife saw *The Tempest* in May 1926, in the production with Sibelius's music that played in Copenhagen that year. She had mixed impressions of the music, and it is not known whether Nielsen himself saw this staging. Even so, in the same month he began to formulate the concept for a clarinet concertante piece, gradually realising, however, that he was more drawn to the flute.⁴⁶ The first evidence we have for the composer's work on the Flute Concerto is from August 1926, when he was abroad investigating methods of radio transmission; the commission for the concerto came, coincidentally, from the same Emil Holm who had sung the part of Caliban in the 1916 Celebration.⁴⁷

One of the most distinctive features of the Flute Concerto – as indeed of the Clarinet Concerto, which followed two years later – is its duality between the solo protagonist and an opposed musical persona, in this case the bass trombone. In principle, this was hardly an unprecedented ploy. Richard Strauss, for example, had given his cellist in the quasi-concerto *Don Quixote* a side-kick violist to represent

44 Mikhail Alekseyev, 'Pushkin i Shekspir', in Alekseyev, *Pushkin: Sravnitel'no-istoricheskiye issledovaniya* [Pushkin: comparative-historical studies], Leningrad 1972, 240-80; Nikolay Zakharov, 'Pushkin i Shekspir', *Znaniye. Ponimaniye. Umeniye*, 5 (2008), http://www.zpu-journal.ru/e-zpu/2008/5/Zakharov_Pushkin&Shakespeare/, accessed 16 April 2020; Emiliya Frid, 'Musorgsky i Shekspir', in Lev Raaben (ed.), *Shekspir i muzika*, Leningrad 1964, 189; Edgar Istel, 'Wagner and Shakespeare', *The Musical Quarterly*, 8 (1922), 495-509.

45 Nielsen himself once noted, in a letter to Julius Rabe of 19 June 1920: 'Of course there are dangers in analogies, in that many false analogies can look like really true ones; but if we confine ourselves to using them as pointers or as a kind of wake-up call, they can never do harm' – CNL, 482; CNB V, 440.

46 See Elly Bruunhus Petersen, 'Concerto for Flute and Orchestra', in *CNU II/9*, xxiv-xxv.

47 *Ibid.*

Sancho Panza; but there the viola plays a supportive rather than challenging role, as a foil rather than an antagonist. So far as later examples are concerned, Shostakovich's First Piano and First Cello Concertos (1931, 1959) contain significant obbligato parts for solo trumpet and solo horn, respectively; but again the duos work complementarily rather than antithetically. Nielsen's clarinettist, on the other hand, is definitely at odds with the side drum (revisiting and reconfiguring their relationship in the first movement of the Fifth Symphony); and this antagonism is even clearer in the Flute Concerto, where the bass trombone is a coarse intruder on the flute's guileless cavortings.

Nielsen himself made remarkably little of that duality in his programme note for the work, though he did memorably sum up the flute's Ariel-like character: 'The flute cannot deny its nature. It belongs in Arcadia and prefers pastoral moods; the composer therefore has to indulge the gentle creature, if he does not want to be stigmatised as a barbarian.'⁴⁸ But of course the bass trombone is precisely *not* inclined to indulge the flute, any more than Caliban is prepared to concede that the island setting of *The Tempest*, once inhabited by his mother Sycorax, is not rightfully his, as opposed to Prospero's and Ariel's. Too bad if the trombone is 'stigmatised as a barbarian'. That is precisely the feature that enables Nielsen to edge the Flute Concerto from a character study towards a drama of psychological archetypes.

It fell to Robert Simpson in 1952 to articulate best what is rather obvious in the score:

There comes a dissonant passage [from b. 80 in the first movement], with the marked entry of none other than the flute's *persona ingratisissima*, the bass trombone. This coarse individual spreads himself all over the score with a grotesque and aimless blether, as if looking for something he has never even remembered to forget, while the aristocratic flute expresses its outraged sensibilities.⁴⁹

Even 63 years on, the eloquence and aptness of Simpson's descriptions (the Latin phrase he borrowed, with acknowledgement, from his rather unlikely supporter Kaikhosru Sorabji) are striking. No less so is the fit with Ariel and Caliban (see Example 7).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xxxiv, translation slightly adapted. Two movements at least in the incidental music to *Moderen* show the Arcadian metaphor in action: 'The fog is lifting' and 'Faith and Hope are playing'.

⁴⁹ Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*, London 1952, 128; rev. edn., London 1979, 140.

Allegro moderato

The musical score is for the first movement of Nielsen's Flute Concerto, measures 80-84. It is in 3/4 time and marked 'Allegro moderato'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the flute (Fl. solo) and timpani (Timp.) parts. The flute part begins with a series of sixteenth-note runs, marked 'ff'. The timpani part features a steady eighth-note pattern, also marked 'ff'. The second system shows the flute and piano parts. The flute part continues with sixteenth-note runs, marked 'ff'. The piano part features a steady eighth-note pattern, marked 'ff'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'ff', 'pp', and 'f'.

Ex. 7: *Flute Concerto*, first movement, bb. 80-84

Set up by the inability of the second subject to sustain its tranquil mood without deviation into anxious flurries (bb. 58ff.) and premonitions (bb. 74ff.), this sixteen-bar passage, whose relatively mild opening only is shown in Example 7, knocks the sonata design of the first movement sideways, and with that its psychological equilibrium. What follows is a reconfiguration of development, two cadenzas (so marked, though respectively short and accompanied) and recapitulation, in a structure that is apparently rhapsodic, certainly emancipated from textbook design, and serving only the dramaturgical interests of the trauma of the flute/trombone confrontation. The long-term rebalancing process is enhanced by a new theme, redemptively lyrical in character, which soothes the agitation of the first subject (from b. 101) and is soon taken up by the flute (from b. 110) as an even more definitive expression of Arcadian stability than the second subject. The E major tonality of this crucial flute presentation will supply Nielsen with the eventual tonal 'solution' to the work (in the second movement from b. 231). The fact that this trajectory eluded him in the first, provisional, ending composed for the premiere goes to show that the overall plan of the work must have been largely intuitive, but it does nothing to invalidate the hypothesis of shared tonal symbolism across works, already hinted at above.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ See Tom Pankhurst, "'We never know where we'll end up': Nielsen's alternative endings to the *Flute Concerto*", *Carl Nielsen Studies* 2 (2005), 132-51, and Kirsten Flensborg Petersen, 'Carl Nielsen's *Flute Concerto*: Form and revision of the ending', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 2 (2005), 196-225.

The association of disparate yet specific tonal regions with character dualism may easily be traced back to the songs for Ariel and Caliban from the Shakespeare Prologue, provided we are not expecting any hard-wired connections. As we have observed, Caliban's key of E flat minor is also the first relatively stable key in the Flute Concerto, albeit one where the flute is still searching for – not yet in – Arcadia (see Ex. 4, above). The first moment of alarm, which connects the pastoral security of the second subject's C major to the first solo entry of the bass trombone, is initially in E flat minor again, the key arriving this time out of the blue and provoking serious disruption (from b. 74 in Example 8).

Ex. 8: Flute Concerto, first movement, bb. 70-80

As in Ariel's song, the tonalities of Arcadia, where the flute is properly at home, are G major and E major. These frame the second movement, which revisits and more definitively heals the painful duality of the first (thereby replaying the scenario of the two-movement Fifth Symphony at a more intimate, chamber-like level). In an opening similar in principle to the first movement, the flute brings euphony out of asperity, this time in a G major far more stable and Arcadian than the first movement's E flat minor (Example 9). Nielsen retains the one-sharp key signature as far as the coda (231

out of 267 bars), despite passing through a myriad of keys and associated shades of security and conflict along the way.

Allegretto ♩ = 100

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system features a flute part (top staff) and piano accompaniment (bottom staff) in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' with a quarter note equal to 100 beats per minute. The flute part begins with a series of eighth notes, and the piano accompaniment provides a rhythmic foundation with eighth notes. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo) and *dim.* (diminuendo). The second system continues the piece, with the flute part playing a melodic line and the piano accompaniment providing harmonic support. Dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *pppp* (pianississimo). The third system shows the flute part playing a more complex melodic line with slurs and accents, while the piano accompaniment continues with eighth notes. A dynamic of *pp* (pianissimo) is indicated.

Ex. 9: Flute Concerto, second movement, bb. 1-18

The second movement is a kind of character-rondo, with returns of the *grazioso* Arcadian theme in its G major home key at bb. 93 and 145. The first two intervening episodes are brief, highly chromatic Adagios, in which the home tonality is more tenuous yet still unmistakable as an underpinning (bb. 73-84, 138-44). The third (bb. 186-95) is really a disguised reconfiguration of the Arcadian theme, designed as if to assuage the asperity into which that theme has inadvertently and anxiously relapsed (bb. 161-86). This passage heralds the bass trombone's rude interruption, which seems

hell-bent on replaying its antagonistic role in the first movement, before it blithely drifts into E major and dares to serenade the flute in a kind of Beauty and the Beast union. E major then functions as the affirmative destination of the coda, in which the bass trombone is silent until its final acquiescent glissandos.

Those trombone sighs – so emollient in effect compared to the instrument’s scathing contributions to the ‘Humoresque’ second movement of the Sixth Symphony – echo the shy glissandi at the end of Nielsen’s 1918 Ovid-based tone poem *Pan and Syrinx*. This is another Beauty-and-the-Beast-like tale of base lust pitched against chaste virtue, the opposites being loosely personified in Nielsen’s work by opposed wind instruments: skirling clarinet versus lyrical low flute and cor anglais. Thus its conclusion is another symbolic dissolution of mythic opposites; it also happens to be the most delicately scored and fastidiously annotated passage of any in a Nielsen score, softening the apparent extreme dissonance of the harmony by means of register and timbre. In the Flute Concerto it is as though the trombone has at an idealist-symbolic level purged its own – or is it Nielsen’s? – choler (Examples 10, 11).

Tempo di marcia ♩ = 100

ff *f*

Tempo di marcia ♩ = 100

f *gliss.* *dim.* *gliss.*

sempre f *rall.* *p*

f *gliss.* *p*

Ex. 10: Flute Concerto, conclusion

[Andantino ♩ = 63-66]

p

gliss.

gliss.

p

glissandi senza vibrato

gliss.

pizz.

arco

pp

ppp

Ex. 11: Pan and Syrinx, conclusion

From duality to reconciliation

It might be wise to end on a note of caution. If we do not need a knowledge of *The Tempest* in order to understand the oppositions in *Pan and Syrinx*, perhaps we do not need them for the Flute Concerto either, any more than we do to interpret other conspicuous dualities in Nielsen's work, as we have attempted to do elsewhere.⁵¹ Perhaps the duality-fixation was so deeply implanted in him that it took on a life of its own, needing no external stimulus. And yet it cries out for further investigation, precisely because since it is such a strong marker of his artistic individuality. Is it not remarkable that if we look for parallels to the strongest character-archetype duality of all in his output, *Saul and David* (which is to say, two title-characters unconnected by a love interest), probably the only one in the established repertoire that comes to mind is Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron*. So it seems that if the figures of Caliban and Ariel did find their counterparts in the Flute Concerto, they did so only because they were planted in a psychological field already richly fertilised by archetypal soil. Indeed, looking globally at the role of dualities in Nielsen's output and his position as some kind of paradoxical popular-modernist, perhaps we can most fruitfully associate him with the maxims of Carl Jung, as pithily re-formulated by Michael Tippett in *A Child of Our Time*: 'I would know my shadow and my light,/ so shall I at last be whole'.

51 Fanning and Assay, "Dreams and Deeds".

Even so, it seems that while dualities were a lifelong preoccupation for Nielsen, the experience of composing songs for Ariel and Caliban may have served as a specific, if delayed-action, catalyst for a new manifestation in the Flute Concerto. For us, the previously uncommentated reference in Nielsen's correspondence to the possibility of an instrumental work about Ariel and Caliban is the decisive piece of evidence that makes this particular exercise more than a flight of fancy. Nor would this be the only instance of Nielsen applying images from his incidental music in more archetypal guise in a major concert work: several themes from his score to *Aladdin* (CNW 17, composed 1918-19), along with whole scenes such as its 'Battle between Good and Evil', surely transferred in this way to his Fifth Symphony (1920-22).⁵² Admittedly the close temporal proximity of these two works makes the hypothesised connection easier to validate. Similarly, though in reverse, the relationship between incidental and concert music has been productively investigated by Daniel Grimley in the case of Nielsen's 1930 music for Sophus Michaëlis's music for *Cupid and the Poet* (*Amor og Digteren*) and its relationship to the Sixth Symphony (1924-25) and the two wind concertos.⁵³ And Leah Broad has done something similar for Wilhem Stenhammar's 1920 incidental music score for a production of *As you Like It*, albeit in a study more focused on that score itself than on its afterlife.⁵⁴

If the flute in some sense may be thought of as a reincarnation of Ariel and the trombone of Caliban, may Prospero too be said to have some presence in the Flute Concerto? Commentators starting with Edward Dowden in 1875, and indeed some productions, have identified this apostrophiser of 'the great Globe itself' as none other than Shakespeare. Georg Brandes was quite cautious in his interpretation, but he still ventured to say, amongst other things, that 'it is Shakespeare's own nature which overflows into Prospero'.⁵⁵ As we have seen, Nielsen himself was uncomfortable with Brandes's tendency to read autobiography into Shakespeare's works; and Shakespeare is equally often equated with Hamlet or Macbeth, or indeed with none of the above, because all those characters are in a more important sense us, and we them. But setting aside such cautionary notes, if Shakespeare is at some level to be understood as embodied in Prospero, might it not be interesting to understand Nielsen, in the particular instance of the Flute Concerto, in an analogous

52 As argued in David Fanning, *Carl Nielsen: Symphony No. 5*, Cambridge 1997, 22-27, 109 n.5.

53 Daniel Grimley, 'Nielsen on the Boulevard: Modernism and the Harlequin-esque in *Cupid and the Poet*', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 94-106.

54 Leah Broad, "'Clear, Happy, and Naïve": Wilhelm Stenhammar's Music for *As You Like It*', *Music and Letters*, 99 (2018), 352-85.

55 Brandes, *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, 663.

light?⁵⁶ The reconciliation of the flute and trombone has no precise parallel in the relationship of Ariel and Caliban, and while Ariel ultimately wins his freedom, Caliban remains a servant of Prospero. Yet the urge for reconciliation and forgiveness is precisely what drives Prospero to disarm: to renounce his magic, breaking his staff, allowing human reconciliation to take place. One lesson of close engagement with Nielsen's letters is that in his last decade he too was looking for reconciliation, after all the bitterness and antagonism he had experienced in his prolonged personal and professional mid-life crisis. And it is his compositional conjuring that brings about the symbolic reconciliation in the Flute Concerto.

Probably the least that can be said about Nielsen's obsession with dualities, including the Ariel/Caliban one, is that it helped him symbolically to look inside himself – for which read also ourselves. This is precisely the thrust of Helge Rode's Shakespeare Prologue text. For all its modest dimensions and scoring, the Flute Concerto – now recognised as one of the finest examples, possibly even *the* finest, of its genre – is at once humane and magical, as it transforms the ephemerality of its stage origins into the permanence of the concert repertoire. Its final reconciliation, like most things of value in life, feels the more rewarding for being hard-won, against heavy resistance. Ariel, Caliban and Prospero were all there in archetypal guise to assist the work, the composer, and ultimately ourselves, on that journey.

56 And he may not have been the only one. For Sibelius's self-identification with Prospero, see Erik Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, vol. 5: 1919-1957, Stockholm 1997, 20: 'For Sibelius, Prospero was a symbol for creative mankind, and thereby for himself, just as Ariel came to symbolise his inspiration and Caliban his demonic side'.

A B S T R A C T

In June 1916 Nielsen supplied incidental music for the tercentenary Shakespeare celebrations in Hamlet's castle of Kronborg, Helsingør (Elsinore). The three choruses and two songs he composed constitute one of his least-known works. But they had a legacy, and not only in the final choral number, which, to other words, subsequently became a candidate for Danish national anthem. Shortly after the event, Nielsen confided that he found Ariel and Caliban (for each of whom he had composed a sharply characterful song) so fascinating that he was considering writing an instrumental work based on their contrasting temperaments. This he never did, at least not overtly. However, ten years later the drastic instrumental contrasts in his Flute Concerto invite a reading based on the Ariel/Caliban duality. The distinctiveness of the concerto's confrontation between the flute solo and the orchestral bass trombone has long been recognised. However, this duality takes on a more focused and at the same time broader significance when viewed in the light of Nielsen's life-long, albeit mainly indirect, engagement with Shakespeare. Suggesting how a composer's occasional character-music may re-emerge in their concert work in the guise of archetypes, our article seeks to contribute to a growing field of investigation into the relationship between 'applied' and concert music.